

Message Text

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21

ACTION EA-09

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 28572

FOL MSG SENT ACTION BANGKOK INFO UDORN SONGKHLA FROM CHIANG
MAI OCT 14 IS REPEATED TO YOU:

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L CHIANG MAI 356

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, TH

SUBJECT: POST TAKEOVER ATMOSPHERE

REF: BANGKOK 28223

1. SUMMARY: IN THE NORTH, THE NEW GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO RECIEVE WIDE POPULAR SUPPORT FROM GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, LOCAL CIVIC LEADERS, BUSINESSMEN, AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC. WE HAVE HEARD NO COMPLAINTS THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT IS TOO PRO AMERICAN. RUMOURS THAT LEFTISTS PLAN TO SET FIRES, KIDNAP CHILDREN, OR PERFORM OTHER ACTS OF VIOLENCE HAVE FURTHER STRENGTHENED THE GOVERNMENT POSITION. THE ONLY EX-CEPTION TO THIS SUPPORT IS FOUND IN THE LOCAL EDUCATIONAL CIRCLES WHERE SOME PROFESSORS AND TEACHERS ARE EXPRESSING OPPOSITION TO THE COUP AND THE ANTI-STUDENT VIOLENCE.

2. WE FIND THERE IS ALMOST TOTAL SUPPORT IN CHIANG MAI AND
IN THE OTHER NORTHERN PROVINCES WE HAVE VISITED FOR THE NEW GOVERN
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MENT.

THIS INCLUDES EVERY OFFICIAL, CIVIC LEADER, AND BUSINESSMAN WITH WHOM WE HAVE TALKED AND MOST OF THE UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS. MINISTRY OF INTERIOR OFFICIALS, FROM GOVERNORS TO DISTRICT OFFICERS IN REMOTE AREAS, HAVE BEEN MOST VOCAL IN SUPPORTING THE ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM COUNCIL AND IN CONDEMNING STUDENTS, MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, AND THE GENERAL MALAISE OF THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT. ONE LOCAL NEWSPAPER EDITOR, OBVIOUSLY UNHAPPY WITH DEVELOPMENTS IN PRESS FREEDOM, LAID ALL THE BALME ON SENI PRAMOTE, NOT ON THE MILITARY TAKEOVER.

3. ALL THESE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN QUICK TO SOLICIT US SUPPORT FOR THE NEW GOVERNMENT, ALTHOUGH SOME HAVE SUGGESTED SUCH SUPPORT MIGHT BE KEPT "CONFIDENTIAL". NO ONE HAS MADE ANY SUGGESTION THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT IS TOO PRO-AMERICAN.

4. THE CLAIM BY MINISTRY OF INTERIOR OFFICIALS AND LOCAL CIVIC LEADERS OF FULL SUPPORT BY THE "SILENT MAJORITY" OF THE THAI POPULATION IS BORNE OUT BY OUR OWN SUPERFICIAL OBSERVATIONS OF THE LOCAL SCENE. ORGANIZATIONS LIKE THE VILLAGE SCOUTS APPEAR ANXIOUS TO DO THEIR PART IN ACTIVELY SUPPORTING THE NEW GOVERNMENT. RUMOURS OF LEFTISTS PLANS TO SET FIRES, KIDNAP CHILDREN OF MILITARY OFFICERS, AND COMMIT OTHER ACTS OF SABOTAGE HAVE BEEN WIDELY CIRCULATED IN CHIANG MAI AND HAVE RESULTED IN FURTHER PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS OF PRO-GOVERNMENT AND ANTI-LEFTIST SENTIMENTS.

5. EXCEPT FOR THE CLOSING OF SCHOOLS, THE MORE THOROUGH SEARCHES AT HIGHWAY CHECK POINTS, THE PRESENCE OF VILLAGE SCOUTS "ON PATROL" TO PROTECT AGAINST SABOTAGE, AND A REDUCTION IN THE LOCAL CRIME RATE, EVENTS IN BANGKOK HAVE HAD LITTLE IMPACT ON THE LIFE OF THE AVERAGE NORTHERN THAI CITIZEN. THERE IS NO RESTRICTION ON DAILY ECONOMIC ACTIVITY, THE PROVINCES ARE NOT BURDENED WITH BANGKOK'S CURFEW, AND THERE IS NO UNUSUAL MILITARY PRESENCE OR POLICE ACTIVITY.

6. THE ONE PART OF SOCIETY WHERE WE HAVE HEARD OF OPPOSITION TO THE RECENT COUP AND THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN THE EDUCATIONAL CIRCLES. SOME PROFESSORS AND TEACHERS IN THE CHIANG MAI AREA HAVE EXPRESSED THE BELIEF THAT THE COUP WAS UNNECESSARY AND THE VIOLENCE EXCESSIVE. THE NATION WIDE SHOWING ON TV OF THE ATTACK ON THAMMASAT MAY HAVE BACKFIRED WITH THIS CHIANG MAI

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INTELLIGENCIA. ALSO, THESE PEOPLE ARE SOPHISTICATED ENOUGH TO SEE THROUGH THE RED SCARE TACTICS BEING USED BY THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IN ITS EFFORTS TO CONSOLIDATE ITS POWER.

7. IT SHOULD BE EMPHASIZED HOWEVER, THAT WHILE THOSE IN EDUCATION MAY GROW MORE RECEPTIVE TO ANTI-GOVERNMENT PROPAGANDA AND MAY EVEN PROVE TO BE AN ATTRACTIVE TARGET FOR FUTURE LEFTISTS RECRUITING ACTIVITIES, THEY REPRESENT A VERY SMALL MINORITY OF

THE LOCAL SOCIETY. THIS MINORITY HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY
ISOLATED DURING RECENT MONTHS BECAUSE OF THEIR ASSOCIATION WITH
STUDENT ACTIVITIES. ANY OPEN EXPRESSION OF OPPOSITION TO THE
PRESENT GOVERNMENT WILL, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING, ONLY
FURTHER INCREASE THEIR SENSE OF ISOLATION.

TANNER

UNQUOTE WHITEHOUSE

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